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WHEN BROOKS RUN DRY.

1 Kings 17:7 "And it came to pass, after a while, that the brooks dried up."

INTRO. Exact location of brook, Cherith, unknown. A tributary of river Jordan. The name means, in Hebrew, "separated". We can best senso the brook Cherith by locating ourselves along some quiet little stream up in the hill country. How restful and refreshing such a stream is!

Well, God sent Elijah the prophet to the brook Cherith, not for a vacation but for a purpose. Like Moses in Midian and Jesus in the wilderness, God sent Elijah into isolation for a reason.

God promised to keep the prophet well watered and fed, but, alas, the little stream dried up. Not to punish Elijah, for he was no fugitive from duty, nor was he false to his God in any way.

Seemingly God had gone back on his promise. Had the faith of the prophet been of the ordinary variety, he might have turned away from following God. But Elijah was an extroadinary person. How quickly some people turn from faith to distrust on the slightest provocation, all too ready to believe anything against their best friend. Not that kind was Elijah. And because of his remarkable faith in the face of great odds and contradictions, let us briefly consider his situation in the light of the text, because our brooks dry up,too, and then it is, if ever, we need a faith that does not waver or weaken.

I. The failure of the waters was meant to deepen the Elijah's sense of brotherhood.

It was the time of drought. All thru the land people suffered for lack of water. No rain and the land was parched. But for the prophet there was water aplenty in the cool running brook Cherith. God did'nt dry up Cherith because he was angry, or to punish Ehijah. God could'nt make a great man out of Elijah by keeping him comfortably

fed and watered while all the world was suffering. That he might be a brother among his brethren and feel ~~his~~ kinship with his sufferingnation it came to pass, after a while that the brook dried dried up.

Our brooks fail, not because God is angry with us, but that we might learn to be brothers, one to another. When thirst becomes common, when suffering becomes common, then we get together to encourage and help as brothers should.

The backing that President Roosevelt is getting, on the part of Congress and the whole nation is due to our realization of a common need. We are now willing to drop our petty differences in order to be led out of our troubles. A new sense of solidarity has gripped the nation.

We were very exclusive once, with a sense of superiority over others, but it came to pass that that our brooks dried up.

II. Again, Elijah eas taught by this event that God does not grant special privileges. God chooses his own by no means of special privileges. God makes no exceptions. Even the prophet who by his very position might consider himself above the ordinary man, must learn to realize that he is subject to the vale of tears common to all people. The mountain cannot say to the valley, "I am greater than thou". No man of God has a right right to say, "I am better than the aberage man."

Our democratic government teaches this same lesson. Many politicians in office become forgetful of their consitiuency in the arrogance and pride pride of their official positions, but before election time they are only too willing to shake hands with every and any voter. On election day my vote counts for just as much as that of the millionaire. The development of special priveleges has been one of the greatest curses upon in America today. The special priveleges at Washington, the special privepriveleges of the monied interests, the assumption of special priveleges of many other kinds has gone a long way to bring about the suffering chaos that

exists today. No class of men, be they ministers, of politicians or millionaires or what not, have a right to expeptions and advantages that jeopar dize the welfare of the common people.

III. But now we come to the most important lesson of our story. The drying up of the brook led Elijah into larger views of God.

"Arise, get thee to Zarapphath", God said.

At Zaraphath Elijah learned two things that greatly influenced his career.

Zaraphath was a heathen village given over to the worship of Baal and reveling in the filth of that idolatry. And there as Elijah viewed that superstition and realized the moral death that followed in its wake, there was burned into his heart theloathing scorn that made him such an antagonist of Baal.

But Elijah leanned more at Zaraphath. He learned that the God of Israel could be gracious to a woman who was born and bred a heathen.

Trained in the Jewish creed and believing that beyond the covenant there was darkness, the thot that the mercy of God was ~~for~~ also for the heathen must have come to Elijah as an earthquake of surprise. On this very point Jesus laid special stress. "Were there no widows in Israel" Jesus asked, "that Elijah must be sent to a poor heathen?" The prophet never would have gone to Zaraphath had not the brook Cherith dried up.

There was something to learn so long as the the brook flowed water. There was also something to learn when it dried up. The murmor of the flowing brook drowned the voice of God's mercy to to the whole world.

As it was with Elijah long ago, so it is with us. The faith of our youth is formed with premature judgment and is often not our very own. The drying up of our brooks compels us to struggle and search and test, compels us to battle till break of day, the dawn that ushers in a stronger faith and a better understanding of life.

Take the blessings that we enjoy- our health, our prosperity, our loved ones and friends. Some of us never lose them, moving beside the refreshing waters to the very end of our lives. But ohers of us experience otherwise. We suffer losses and sharp reverses. Our brooks fail us. We no longer have what we wanted. All such who have obeyed God's command to go to &araphath, have they not found a deeper meaning to their religion? Has not God drawn nearer to them? Has not life become more meaningful and precious to them? Tho their brooks have failed, tho the music of their Cheriths has ceased, they have found in the ocean of God's love and goodness their greatest joy and satisfaction.

When we become set in our ways and travel in ruts, it seems as tho God has to jolt us out by drying up our brooks. It is'nt pleasant to be compelled to give up our old ideas of God and life, bu I verily believe that it is for our good.

The difference between people is that some react in rebellion to such jolting and become hardened, while others shake themselves, rub their spiritual eyes, and press on to the higher ground.

Which do you do?